7: Gt. Brit., Colonial Office G-3 (1949-50) 1951 MM1 Aden mm1

Chapter 6: Production

SALT

The principal native product of Aden is salt, made from sea-water by solar evaporation in a series of pans, 3,682 acres in extent. 317

The industry is in the hands of four manufacturers, one Italian and three Indians. There has been a considerable improvement in production in the last three years as can be seen from the following figures :

Year	*Quantity of salt produced in tons*
1946	113,042
1947	194,549
1948	271,108
1949	303,432
1950	255,865

India bought three-quarters of its overseas requirements of salt from Aden, and Japan also increased its demands. [439]

FISHERIES

The position in the industry is in the main unaltered since the publication of the 1948 report. The Fishery Department began work on a permanent basis during the winter of 1949-50, when the Fishery Officer returned from leave in December and a British skipper for the fishery vessel arrived in Aden in January. During 1950, progress was disappointing, the fishery vessel being handicapped for eight of the twelve months by a broken winch for which the necessary parts could not be obtained, while storage space for fishing gear was not made available until July. A considerable amount of work remains to be done ashore and on board the fishery vessel before the department can be regarded as adequately equipped for its duties. 654

The recording of the amount of fish handled by the four markets in the Colony was instituted early in the year. This and public opinion have emphasised the fact that the present fishing industry is unable to supply the needs of the population of the Colony except for occasional brief periods. The result has been a varying scarcity and occasional short gluts, the high but fluctuating prices causing hardship for the consumer and insecurity for the producer. How much the position has been due to poor catches and how much to increased population it is as yet impossible to say ; the fact remains that a population of over 100,000 is dependent for its fish on a small fleet of paddling and sailing canoes with a range of a few miles, and that no storage facilities exist except for one small and obsolete cold store, and a number of decrepit ice boxes at the markets. 226 433 [254]

The Fishery Department is attacking the problem in two ways, by increasing the efficiency of existing equipment and methods and by exploring neighbouring waters with the fishery vessel in search of 654 226

8:Gt. Brit., Colonial Office G-3 (1951-52)1954 MM1 Aden MM1

each boat for purchasing boats and gear, and maintenance of the crew. In repayment the exporters take as much fish as they can from the fishermen indebted to them. Despite the frequent disagreements over the value of fish caught, few *nakhoodas* ever get free of debt.

There are no fish factories but salting is carried out by seven Arab exporters, who sell most of the fish to Ceylon. A small fish-meal plant was installed by one merchant in 1951. Sardines, anchovies and shrimps are sun-dried and bagged by these exporters in the winter months. There is one ice factory in Indian hands; some of its production is utilised for fish boxes in the markets. A cold store in British hands has not been successfully used for fish storage owing to difficulty in obtaining regular supplies of fish.

Statistics of fishermen, boats and fishing gear and exports of dried and salted fish are given on page 26.

Marketing

Marketing of fish is done generally through a single auctioneer in each of the markets. Unofficial auctioneers exist who take about 12½ per cent of the selling price. In order to control as large a share as possible of the fish passing through their hands the auctioneer lends money to fishermen against the sole right to auction their fish. Fishermen who are not indebted are free to sell to any stall-holder or rent a stall for themselves but the fact that unofficial auctioneers offer ready cash results in most of the fish passing through an agent's hands.

Fluctuating supply and demand make it impossible to give reliable figures for the average price of fish but observation shows that about 70 per cent of the price paid by the consumer goes to the fishermen, 12 per cent to the auctioneer and 18 per cent to the stallholder.

The amount of fish taken to market is normally insufficient for the needs of the populaton except in the summer months when gluts are common.

Events affecting Production

The production of fish in 1951 was below normal particularly during the summer monsoon. This is attributed to the lack of strong winds and poor upswelling of cold water which normally drives fish to the warmer coastal water. Shoals of sardine were present early in December, 1951, off the Colony and moved slowly eastwards during January and February, 1952. Large yields were obtained and fresh and dried sardines were plentiful in the markets.

The summer monsoon of 1952 was a strong one and the majority of sambuk-owners did very well. The water temperature was 69°F on one occasion and fish normally living in rocks 15 miles out were caught in great numbers inshore. The shrimp and anchovy season was generally bad and few sardines had appeared by the end of 1952.

Fisheries Department

The Fisheries Department comprises one Fisheries Officer, one